

NEWS

From the Office of

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Supervisors Secure Volunteers to Assist Returning Veterans

SAN BERNARDINO . Four part-time volunteers will soon be available to assist the county Department of Veterans Affairs in helping local veterans find jobs, homes, health care, and support for their families thanks to action taken Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors.

As a Marine Corps veteran and someone who places tremendous value in those who serve our country, it was an honor to support this program, said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt. The First District is home to five military installations representing all four branches of the military, so the need for these services in the High Desert is great.

California welcomes home nearly 30,000 returning veterans annually. Although San Bernardino County accounts for only about 6 percent of the state's population, more than 23 percent of those 30,000 brave men and women . more than 7,000 . return to San Bernardino County.

The four volunteers serving San Bernardino County will be part of the AmeriCorps program and will be made available to the county through the California Department of Veterans Affairs' Operation Welcome Home+ initiative. The program is designed to meet the needs of returning veterans by assisting them in obtaining educational opportunities and job training, finding employment, securing housing, getting all forms of health care, qualifying for federal benefits, and ensuring support for their families.

These volunteers will work with county staff and community partners to identify the needs of local veterans and conduct outreach activities focused on assisting veterans in identifying and receiving the benefits and services to which they are entitled and so richly deserve.

Under an agreement approved Tuesday by Mitzelfelt and his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, AmeriCorps will provide the county Department of Veterans Affairs with four part-time volunteers, each working a maximum of 100 hours per year.

The county Department of Veterans Affairs has notified area military bases, veterans's service providers, and the state Employment Development Department about the new volunteers. The department tentatively plans to assign the volunteers to Ft. Irwin, the Marine Base at Twentynine Palms, the Veterans Affairs hospital in Loma Linda, and the department's headquarters.

The First District is home to the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin near Barstow and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, where soldiers and Marines receive the most realistic training before deployment. The district also hosts the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow, part of Edwards Air Force Base, and a large portion of the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake.